

20 Idaho's Family History: Historic Records at Risk **01**
Planning for Progress

Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board

The Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) is one of fifty-five organizations in the states and territories of the United States that work in affiliation with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for the purpose of preserving, publishing and promoting the use of documentary sources relating to the history of the United States.

The SHRAB serves the public as the central advisory board for historical records projects and plans. It provides leadership and guidance to help ensure the identification, preservation, and use of the state's historical resources (public and private) for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.

Idaho Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) 1997 – 2001

Terry P. Abraham
Head, Special Collections
University of Idaho

Pam Babbitt
Records Section Commander
Ada County Sheriff's Office

Blaine Bake
Archivist
Ricks College

Charles Bolles
State Librarian
Idaho State Library

Duane Bogstie
Records Technician
State Dept. of Administration

Steven Caylor
Trial Court Administrator
Second Judicial District

Denton Darrington
Idaho State Senator, District 25
Retired Teacher, Burley Junior High School

Gary Domitz
Head, Special Collections
Idaho State University, Eli. M. Oboler Library

Shauna Huerta
Police Records Supervisor
Pocatello Police Department

Michelle L Lamm
Records Analyst, J.R. Simplot Company
Record Center

Mary Reed
Director
Latah County Historical Society

Virginia Ricketts
Director
Jerome County Historical Society

Carol Schreiber
Former Power County Clerk
American Falls

Richard Stevens "Steve" Smylie
Idaho State Representative, District 15A
Teacher, Boise Independent School District

Sister Carm Ternes
Religious Archives
Monastery of St. Gertrude

Alan Virta
Head, Special Collections
Boise State University

Steve Walker
State Archivist
Idaho State Historical Society

Bruce Walters
CRM, Corporate Records Manager
Washington Group International

This report was prepared with the support of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission under the auspices of the Idaho State Historical Advisory Board. A summary report is also available. Copies may be obtained from the Board through the State Archives, Merle Wells Archives Building, 2205 East Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, ID 83712. Telephone: 208-334-2620. Web URL: <http://www2.state.id.us/ishs/shrab.html>

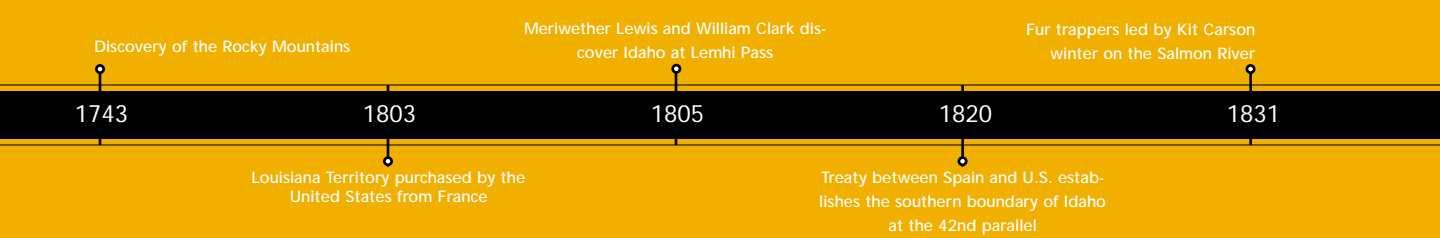




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

Idaho's Family History - Historical Records

Consider the variety of documents that define a family . . . your great-grandparent's wedding certificate . . . a diary that your Mother kept when she was a young girl. Precious items that help tell the story of you and your family. These items remind us of the past and can help us understand the present and the future.

Each state has a family history as well, made up of the historical records that document the events, people and places of the state's family—it's citizens. Idaho's family history contains the letters, diaries, photographs, minutes, reports, petitions, maps, licenses, architectural plans, birth certificates, ledgers, business correspondence, and the many other records produced by Idaho's residents—past and present—that help us understand how our state has uniquely grown and developed.

These records not only tell the story of Idaho's past but they promote accountability of government, business, and other institutions. They can protect the individual rights of Idaho residents by such means as proving ownership of property or eligibility for various benefits. They support self-understanding when we uncover our family history. They link us directly with the people who came before us.

The Urgent Need

Imagine now if you lost your past. You had no photographs to remind you of precious relatives, now gone. Imagine if you couldn't produce papers that proved ownership of your house or documented your children's birth. We protect ourselves from this by storing important papers in secure places such as safe deposit boxes. We strive to preserve those things that are important to us.

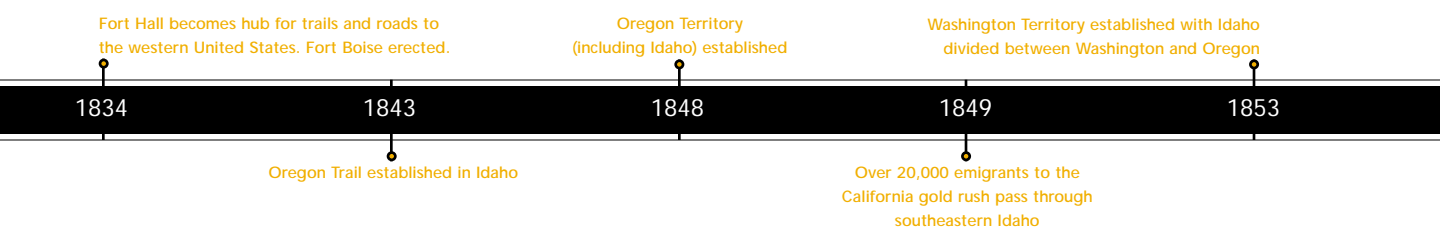
Just as we would be devastated at the loss of our treasured family documents and mementos, it is a tragedy when the state's documentary history is lost. Yet this is happening every day.

Records are destroyed through both human-made and natural causes. Our important connections with the past are disappearing. When historical records are lost, we also lose the potential that information offers all of us to understand our place in the world.

Historical records in your community and across the state are at risk. Your support is needed to improve the condition of Idaho historical records.

Historical records repositories in Idaho are under staffed, under funded, and overlooked.

In order to identify where the needs are greatest for the preservation and use of Idaho's records the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) worked closely with Idaho communities and the public to articulate the need for statewide action to preserve and make accessible our historical records. This plan for the future is the result of that work and represents the collaboration and ideas of many of Idaho's family members.



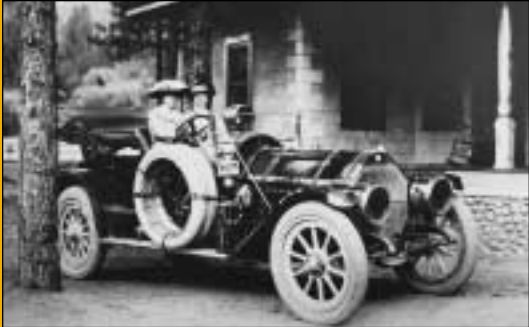


Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

Survey Results

Surveys of both public and private records repositories in Idaho demonstrate a dramatic need for improved storage facilities and access to trained staff in the care of our records. Without efforts to improve preservation of statewide historical records, Idaho will lose its recorded history.

See page 11 and 12

Where Are Historical Records Found?

Historical records can be produced almost anywhere. They document people's activities from mundane everyday events to momentous occasions. Outside of family-held documents, historic records are most often found in public and private institutions. These may include:

- State government departments and offices
- Local government departments and offices
- Historical societies and organizations
- Business and industry
- Academic institutions
- Religious institutions and denominations
- Libraries
- Professional associations
- Cultural organizations
- Ethnic groups and organizations

The Gift of a Family

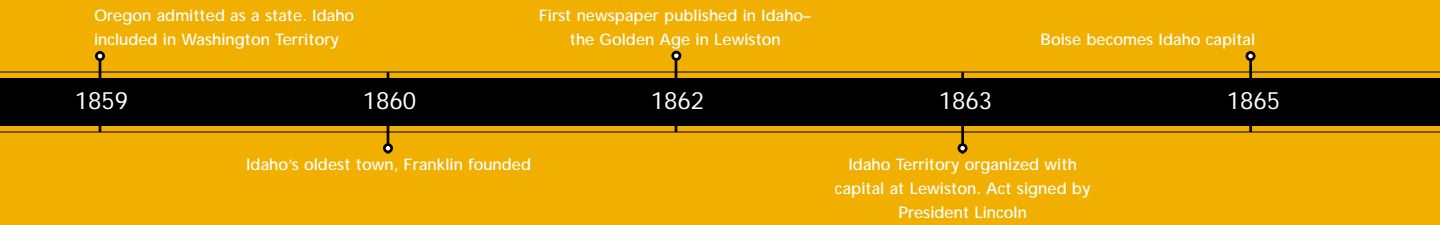
William Dale Kelly knew he had been born in Idaho, that his mother had died shortly after his birth in 1918, and that he had been passed from relative to relative while growing up. That was pretty much the extent of his family history. He had always considered himself an orphan.

However, he had shared the little he knew with his own children and as he approached his 80th birthday, daughter Leslie Kelly-Hall decided to try and find her father's (and her own) family past. Leslie knew it wouldn't be easy, particularly since one thing that they did know was that her grandmother's maiden name had been Smith.

Leslie turned to Idaho Historical Society archivist and genealogist Rod House who began to put the family's clues to work in tracing information. Rod used records held by the State Archives and other genealogical sources to not only obtain family history but a link to the present. Rod found relatives still living in Rupert, Idaho who not only knew about Dale's family but had photographs and family papers that they were anxious to share.

As Dale Kelly's birthday approached on Christmas Day of 1998, Leslie and her siblings prepared to present their father with the greatest gift they could give him—his family. They had assembled a scrapbook of photos and information, which they presented to him on Christmas morning. In an emotional reunion Dale saw newspaper clippings of his birth and his mother's death. He discovered that his oldest daughter was the spitting image of her grandmother, his mother – who neither Dale nor his family ever knew.

Without the preserved historical records of repositories in Idaho and elsewhere this miracle could not have happened. Leslie Kelly-Hall says "My father now has family, roots, depth . . . what a gift."



Historical Records?

Almost anyone may have a need for accessing a historical document sometime in his or her life.

Examples of uses:

- Proving eligibility for retirement or medical care through military records
- Researching past family members to establish important medical history information
- Establishing property title in land disputes
- Tracing lost friends or relatives
- Uncovering family history
- Researching past community history
- Documenting litigation
- Developing educational lessons and materials
- Planning community or school reunions



Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society



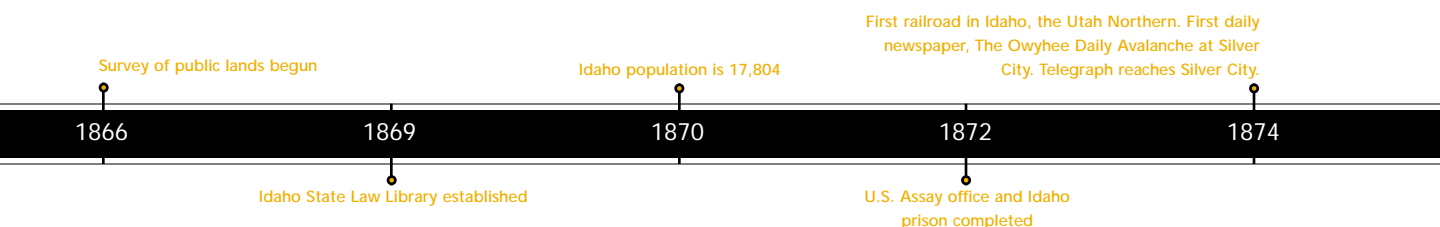
Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

What's Needed?

To assure the preservation of Idaho's recorded history it is essential to have the support of everyone who understands its importance and the danger of losing this information.

The future requires:

- A public that values our historical records and archives
- Collaboration between historical professionals and records repositories
- Resources necessary for trained staff, appropriate records storage facilities, information technology
- A plan for the future of Idaho's records
- Improved accessibility and storage conditions for Idaho's records



PLANNING FOR PROGRESS

During 1999 and 2000 the Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) led a twenty-two-month strategic planning effort to assess and improve the conditions of historical records in Idaho. Supported by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the board met with citizens, government officials, business people, librarians, archivists, researchers, and others to gather information about their concerns, and to generate solutions. Together they identified five priorities to improve the current condition of historical records in Idaho. They are:

- 1. Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.
- 2. Work collaboratively to promote common goals.
- 3. Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.
- 4. Plan for the adequate documentation of Idaho history.
- 5. Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.

Participants helped set goals and objectives for each priority area. Every Idaho resident can become an advocate for historical records and help achieve these objectives.



Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

PRIORITY ONE

Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.

Many of us do not stop to think that the creation of historical records goes on every day in the homes, businesses, schools, organizations, and government offices of Idaho. People may be unaware of how historical records can be used to improve their daily lives. When the value of current and historical records is not recognized, these records are under-utilized and at risk of loss.

Goal

Increase public awareness of the value and use of historical records.

Objective 1: Design, execute and facilitate effective public outreach programs.

Activities:

(2001): Implement Preservation Workshops for state-wide professional organizations including County Commissioners and Clerks, County Assessors, County Treasurers, Records and Clerks, Sheriff's Association and others.

Objective 2: Develop and promote a special "Archives Week," throughout Idaho schools and communities, recognizing the needs and the efforts to improve the state of historical records in Idaho.

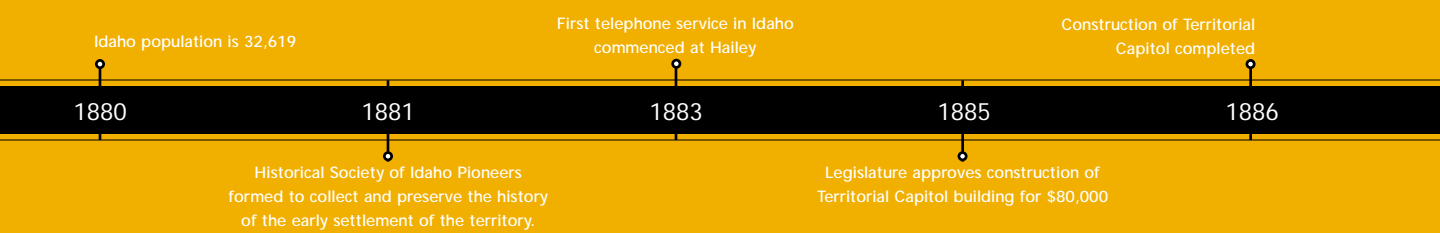
Activities:

(2001): Establish Archives Week during the second week of October of every year.

(2002-2005): Continue to develop Archives Week exposure and activities.

Institute a program to encourage elected officials to visit archives and records repositories in their home districts. Use this event and visit as an opportunity for education.

Objective 3: Support the use of historical records in schools.



Activities:

(2002-2005): Begin a “Corps of Rediscovery” program of Idaho history, helping students recognize authentic historical evidence from fiction. The program allows the individual to explore and discover her or his “Idaho Heritage” through the use of historical records. Promotes the idea that Idaho’s history belongs to all of us. Develop and create an Idaho History website to educate teachers to the importance of teaching about and using historical records.

Create a virtual online exhibit using “Corps of Rediscovery” as its theme, to acquaint visitors to the importance of historical records to learning.

(2005-2011): Continue and expand historical records education programs established previously.

Objective 4: Identify and preserve documentation from Idaho’s territorial period (1863-1890).

Activities:

(2001): Introduce the Territorial Records Project, designed to identify, properly preserve, and make accessible all Idaho Territorial records.

(2002-2005): Complete Territorial Records Project.

PRIORITY TWO

Work collaboratively to promote common goals.

Idaho records managers, curators, archivists, librarians, historians, county clerks, judges and other researchers have formed strong independent groups to serve their specific needs. These organizations share common concerns about historical records and could effect a powerful force for advocacy and change. Currently, however, no effective mechanism exists to bring these professionals together to advocate for the management of historical records.

Goal

Foster cooperation, collaboration, and information sharing within the historical records community.

Objective 1: Promote collaboration among professionals and organizations across the historical records community.

Activities:

(2001): Identify potential collaborative partners and develop a database of information on each. Attempt to meet or communicate with each organization for levels of commitment for collaboration. Schedule presentations on the Plan for Progress at partner’s meetings.

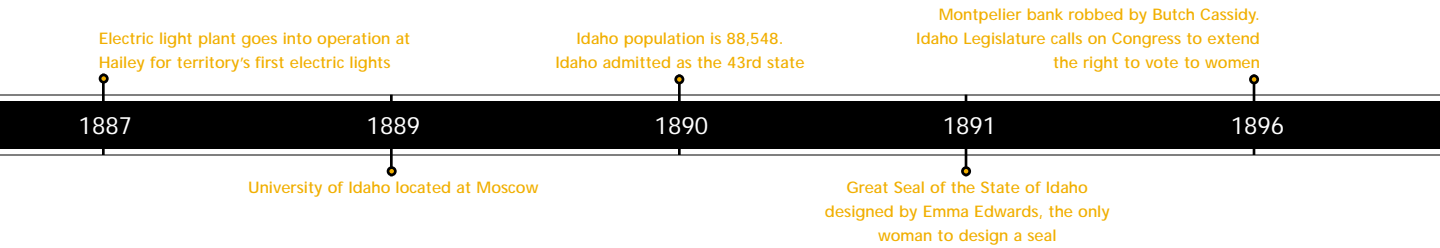
Work with the Idaho State Historical Society’s Outreach Division to develop further methods for disseminating the SHRAB’s Strategic Plan throughout the state.

The SHRAB Board participate in meetings with other related organizations (i.e., Idaho Heritage Trust, Idaho Preservation Council, ISHS, Association of Museums, etc.) to discuss long-term plans.

(2002-2010): Continue to develop relationships with partner organizations and co-sponsor projects, policy formations, and procedural creation with other organizations. Co-sponsor legislation, rule-making, and resource allocation including statewide retention schedules for local governments. Collaborate with other entities to assess desired needs for a facility, and other resources.



Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society



PRIORITY THREE

Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.

A lack of public awareness has contributed to the traditional under-funding of archives and records programs. Even programs managing nationally significant records have difficulty obtaining sufficient space, staff, and resources. The conditions in community repositories are desperate. Few repositories have access to secure and environmentally stable records storage or have staff with the necessary expertise to make records available to schools, researchers, and genealogists. The budgets of existing federal grant programs are not adequate to meet the needs of records holders.

Goal

Assist organizations to obtain resources to manage historical records.

Objective 1: Seek dedicated funding for the preservation and maintenance of records that have enduring value to the public.

Activities:

(2001): Apply to the NHPRC and other funding agencies for funding strategic plan objectives. Funding is needed for major workshops and presentations to other agencies.

Develop plan for establishing statewide dedicated funds for the preservation and maintenance of Idaho records of enduring value.

(2002-2010): Apply to NHPRC and other funding agencies for workshops and apply to the Idaho Humanities Council for special projects (i.e., curriculum materials with historic records, in both paper and electronic formats.)

Establish a statewide dedicated fund for the preservation and maintenance of records of enduring value which would award grants to historical records repositories for improvement of preservation and access of their record collections.

PRIORITY FOUR

Plan for the adequate documentation of Idaho history.

A central task of archivists and other records holders is to acquire records. This work is guided by knowledge of what records are necessary to document a given community's life and history. No generally accepted "vision" or set of documentation goals has been established for Idaho life and history. We need dialogue among scholars, archivists, and citizens to establish a sense of what the most inclusive and representative record of the state should be. Similar discussions at the local level would ensure the identification and preservation of our communities' unique heritage.

Goal

Improve documentation of Idaho History

Objective 1: Support the identification and collection of records that have enduring value.

Activities:

(2001): Evaluate and establish criteria for the identification of historical records at the time of their creation including electronic records. Promulgate a uniform statewide retention schedule.

(2002-2005): Increase staff for historical preservation positions at the regional level (i.e., Records Coordinator/Facilitator/Identifier for existing repositories).

(2005-2010): Identify gaps in the records collection and begin implementing a plan to fill. Begin planning for State provision of preservation microfilm services (with joint imaging capability) or plan for the subsidization of local entities that use this process currently.

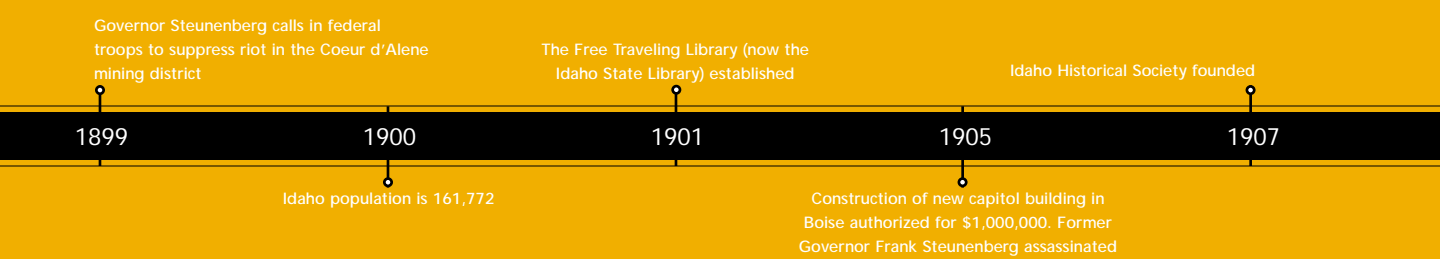




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

PRIORITY FIVE

Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.

Despite their best efforts, many repositories are not able to fulfill their mission to collect, preserve, and provide access to their holdings. Curators often need assistance to evaluate and implement all of their archival responsibilities. Even those aware of their programs’ shortcomings may not have the resources or expertise necessary to improve the management and accessibility of records. Significant records lie untouched and unknown in bundles, trunks, and boxes in repositories of every size and type. Many records creators are not aware of the preservation and processing issues inherent in the various media of records (photographs, microfilm, audio-visual materials, electronic, oversized materials, blueprints, etc.).

Goal

Improve the condition and accessibility of historical records in Idaho.

Objective 1: Recommend and support standards for preservation and access of records that have enduring value.

Activities:

(2002-2005): Support a statewide program of preservation microfilming for long-term preservation of public records of enduring value combined with providing access electronically.

Recommend and work toward adoption and funding of statewide standards by executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government with legal consequences for noncompliance.

(2005-2011): Identify records of enduring value in need of conservation treatment statewide and seek funding to improve environmental and security conditions at public historical records storage facilities across Idaho.

Objective 2: Support continuing education and other activities that enable repositories to strengthen archival programs.

Activities:

(2001): Develop means to increase the awareness of records creators, holders, and users of the problems associated with new technologies through presentations at scheduled meetings and through the media.

(2002-2005): Support the efforts of records holders to provide access to records in local repositories by urging a public/private partnership for funding.

(2005-2011): Facilitate cooperative solutions to the challenges of new technology by supporting the continuing education of records holders through annual workshops.

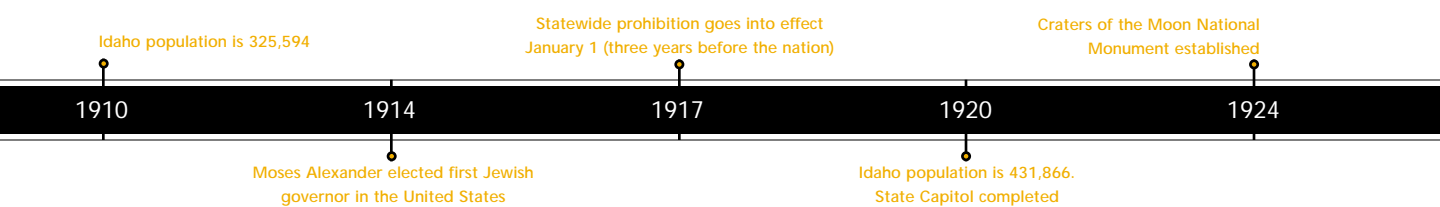




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

What You Can Do

All of the projects described in this document depend on the involvement of a diverse group of individuals. Your participation in the projects is supported, welcomed, and encouraged. You can be an active member of a working group or work within your community or region. Other actions that you can take as an individual that will also support the efforts of the historical records community are listed below. Each helps to improve the preservation and accessibility of Idaho's historical records.

Be an Advocate

- Contact your public library, historical society, county or municipal clerk's office and other local historical records repositories to find out how to help. Volunteer your time, money, and skills to help preserve your community heritage.
- Contact business and community leaders and let them know that historical records contain the community's heritage and identity. Let them know that the value, use, and preservation of this important resource are worthy of their attention.
- Contact government leaders and let them know that you support funding for historical records.
- Work within your region to advocate for historical records projects.
- Support historical records projects that ensure the accessibility of this vital resource for use today and in the future.
- Take advantage of information and opportunities available through the State Historical Society and the Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board. For more information visit the SHRAB website at <http://www2.state.id.us/ishs/shrab.html> or contact the State Historical Records Coordinator at (208) 334-2620.

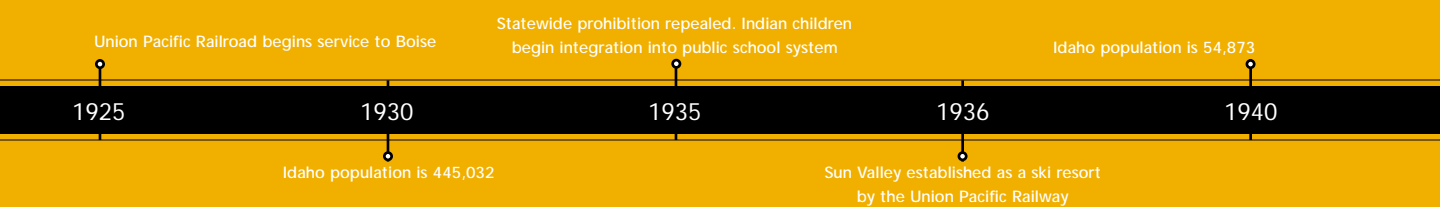




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

History of Idaho Records Policy

In 1881 the Historical Society of Idaho Pioneers was formed to collect and preserve the history of Idaho's early settlement. The state's early pioneers recognized the importance of collecting the contributions of what was then a fairly new territory.

In 1907, following Idaho's admission to the Union in 1890, the state legislature established the Idaho State Historical Society. The law specified that the Society was "to collect [and carefully preserve] books, maps, charts, pictures, and other papers and materials illustrative of the history of this State."

In 1947 the Society's role in records preservation was expanded when the legislature extended to it "state archival authority." This empowered all public offices in the state to deliver to the Society their records and documents that were "not in current use."

While charged with collecting and preserving the state's records, the Society's ability to carry out the charge has been hindered by lack of enforcement and funding. In 1917 it was noted that "the shortage of space and frequent changes of administration have not been conducive to the establishment of a well-organized system of record-filing and deposit . . . The overflow from many offices has been stored in boxes in the basement, the records now being inaccessible."

Shortages in staffing and funding over the subsequent years have continued. In 1964 the Society's space was described as "fast becoming desperate, make[ing] it impossible to accession systematically the permanently valuable records of the state." By 1989 space had run out once again and records were not able to be accepted, creating a problem in state and local government offices throughout the state. In a 1993 report Idaho was ranked 45th out of 50 in the percent of total state expenditures allocated to archives and records and 51st out of 51st (including territories) in the number of archives and records staff per 1000 state employees.

Record storage in the Merle Wells State Archives Building was finally completed in 1998 and records were moved from formerly inaccessible and inadequate storage to the new building. However, plans are already under way for expansion of this space to accommodate the exploding growth in records. Idaho continues to rank in the lowest 5% in spending for state archives.

This strategic plan will help support the Idaho Historical Society and other public historical repositories in the care and use of these records.

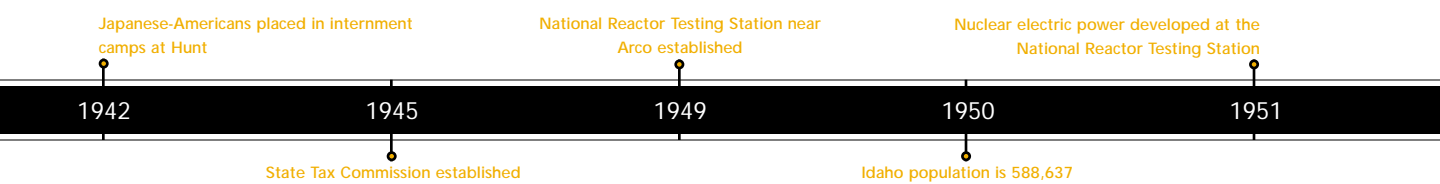




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

Survey of Idaho Historical Records Repositories

A 1999 survey of 76 repositories provided valuable information about the state of historical records in Idaho. The results of the survey showed, as has been historically true in Idaho as well as most other states, there is a serious need for experienced and trained staff and funding for access and preservation. Because our repositories do not have the budgets necessary for improving the condition of their facilities and access to staff and information, Idaho is losing its historical heritage.

Results:

Average Size of Historical Records Collections–

	Average Linear Feet	Average # of Item
Paper Documents	514	
Photographs	9	38,707
Microfilm	7.5	1,107
Oversize Paper	3.6	140
Movies		42.6
Video	126	33
Audio Tapes	43	229
Computer Media	3.2	10

Range of Historical Records Coverage–
1600s to present

Estimate of Annual Research Requests–

- By Mail = 5%
- By e-mail = 3%
- In-person = 79%
- By telephone = 13%

Total = 27,787

Annual Spending Budget for Historical Records–

Spending Range	Total
\$1,000-\$10,000	18
\$10,000-\$50,000	9
\$50,000-\$100,000	1
Less than \$1,000	34
More than \$100,000	1
No Response	13

Priorities for Improving the Management of Historical Records–

1	Improve Preservation/Conservation
2	Improve Staff Training
3	Improve Finding Aids
4	Process Backlog
5	Encourage Use of Collections
6	Increase Storage Capacity
7	Increase Funding
8	Increase Visibility
9	Improve Storage Conditions
10	Develop Disaster Plan

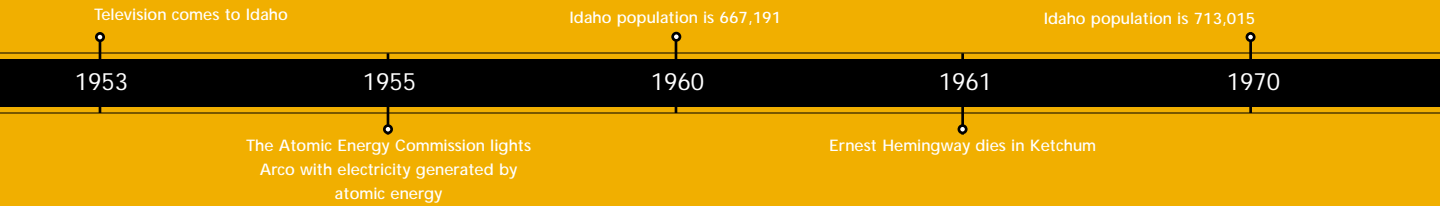




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

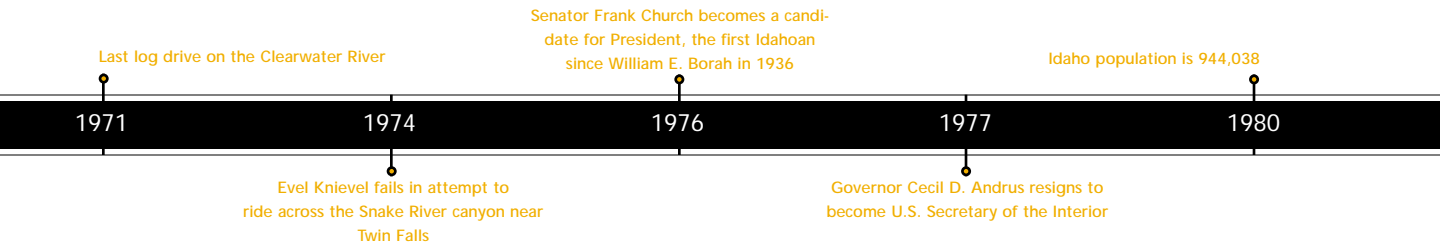
Governmental Agencies

A 1999 survey of State, County and Municipal governments and Public School Districts revealed that the majority of Idaho's historical public records are at risk due to inadequate storage and lack of trained and knowledgeable staff or access to information. If nothing is done to improve the preservation of statewide historical records, Idaho stands to lose a valuable part of its heritage and place itself at a high legal risk.

Participants–

- 39% of State Government Records Repositories
- 82% of County Government Records Repositories
- 31% of Municipal local Government Records Repositories
- 46% of Public School District Records Repositories

	Yes				No			
	State	Cnty	Local	Schls	State	Cnty	Local	Schls
Official records stored in fire-resistant vault or safe?	9%	6%	22%	48%				
Take any special measures to ensure the preservation/ conservation of official permanent and historical records?					45%	53%	79%	83%
Trouble retrieving records?	36%	44%	62%	58%				



Glossary

APPRAISAL: The process of determining the value and disposition of records based on their current administrative, legal, and fiscal use; their evidential and informational or research value; their arrangement; and their relationship to other records.

ARCHIVES: (1) The non-current records of an organization or institution preserved because their continuing value; also referred to as archival materials or archival holdings. (2) The agency responsible for selecting, preserving, and making available archival materials; also referred to as an archival agency. (3) The building or part of a building where such materials are located.

ARCHIVIST: A person responsible for or engaged in one or more of the following activities in an archival repository: appraisal and disposition, accessioning, preservation, arrangement, description, reference service, exhibition, and publication.

DOCUMENT: Recorded information regardless of medium or characteristics.
See also: RECORDS

DOCUMENTATION: In archives and libraries, the identification, acquisition, and preservation of historical records that provide evidence of people, organizations, places, events, and activities.

GOVERNMENT RECORDS: Records created, collected or used by federal, state and local governments in conducting their activities.

HISTORICAL RECORDS: Records that has long-term or enduring value due to its content.

MANUSCRIPT: A handwritten or typed document, including a letterpress or carbon copy. A mechanically produced form completed in handwriting or typescript is also considered a manuscript.

MANUSCRIPTS: Bodies or groups of personal papers, collections of documents, and individual documents acquired by a manuscript repository because of their special importance.

PRESERVATION: (1) The basic responsibility to provide adequate facilities for the protection, care, and maintenance of archives, records, and manuscripts. (2) Specific measures, individual and collective, undertaken for the repair, maintenance, restoration or protection of documents.

PUBLIC RECORDS: Records accumulated by government agencies or open to public inspection by law or custom.

RECORDS: All recorded information, regardless of media or characteristics, made or received and maintained by an organization or institution in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of its business.

RECORDS CENTER: A facility for the low-cost and efficient storage and furnishing of reference service on semi-current records pending their ultimate disposition.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT: That area of general administrative management concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, use and maintenance, and disposition of records.

REPOSITORY: A place where archives, records, or manuscripts are kept.

RETENTION SCHEDULE: A document governing, on a continuing basis, the retention and disposition of the recurring records series of an organization or agency.

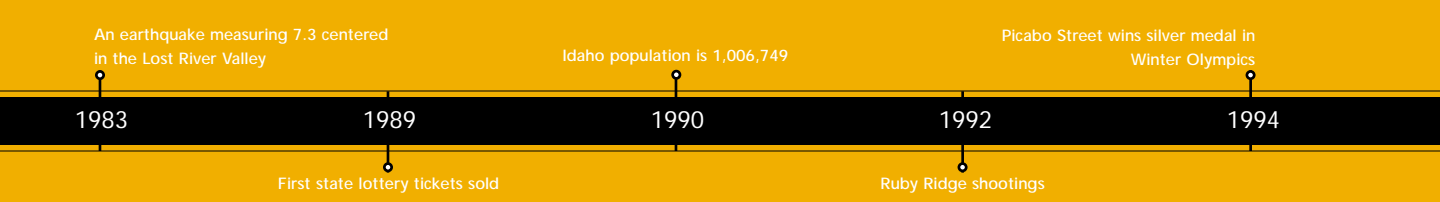




Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society



Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

